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ABSTRACT

The Parent 'N' Me course at Fitchburg State College in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, is for parents who wish to observe the competency of their 2- to 6-month-old infants, encouraging an infant-oriented environment that allows the infants to become attentive, active, exploring individuals who reward themselves in the mastery of new tasks. The course allows the infant to become an active participant rather than a passive recipient during self-help activities such as diapering and feeding. The 8-week course pairs each parent with an early childhood Fitchburg College student, allowing the student to observe and help care for the mother's infant. Student-infant and parent-infant interactions are videotaped and later observed by the class. The course shows parents: (1) how to observe, understand, respect, and enjoy the individuality of each infant; (2) what to expect of their infants at any given stage of development; (3) how to set up an infant-oriented environment at home; (4) how to synchronize infants' needs and wants with parents' needs and wants; and (5) when to intervene and not intervene in the infants activities. (Introductions from the instructor and early childhood students, course participant testimonials, and course observations are included.) (MDM)

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ED 403 977

Parent 'N' Me: Parent-Infant Guidance Class

Diane Suskind

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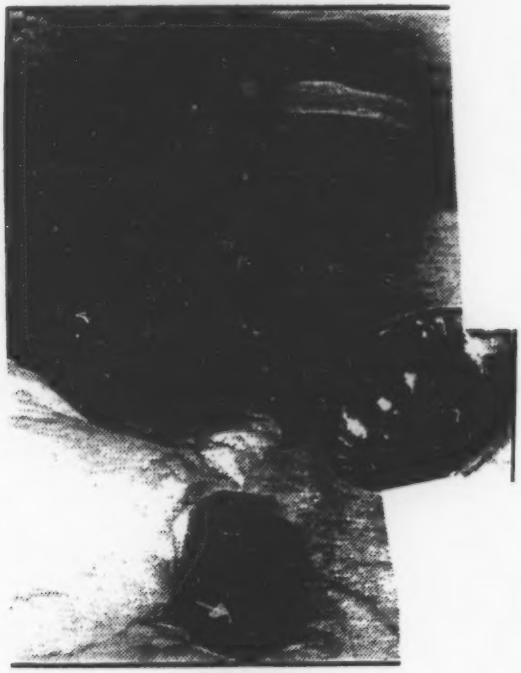
Fitchburg State College

Parent 'N' Me

Parent-Infant Guidance Class



Instructed by
Diane Suskind, Ed.D.
with assistance from the students
of the Fitchburg State College
Infant/Toddler course.

Fall 1993
)ctober 3 - November 30, 1993
Tuesdays 9:00 - 10:20 am
McKay Campus School

Who Could Attend

This Parent 'N' Me course is for parents who wish to observe just how competent their infants are. The course encourages an infant-oriented environment that allows infants to become attentive, active, exploring individuals who reward themselves in the mastery of new tasks. The course allows the infant to become an active participant rather than a passive recipient during self-help activities such as diapering and feeding.

Training is based on the RIE Philosophy (Resources for Infant Educarers). Founded in 1978 by Magda Gerber and Dr. Tom Forrest, the RIE is a non-profit organization concerned with improving the care and education of infants. The RIE philosophy espouses a humanistic-theraputic way of working with infants. The goal is an authentic child—one who feels secure, autonomous, and competent.

Class Dates

All classes are held on Tuesdays between 9:00 am and 10:20 pm except October 3rd.

October 3, 2-4 pm Parents Only

October 5, 12, 19, 26

November 2, 16, 23, 30

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The Parent 'N' Me course will include the following topics

- How to observe, understand, respect, and enjoy the individuality of each infant.
- What can parents realistically "expect" of their infants at any given stage of development.
- How to set up an infant-oriented environment in the home that is physically safe, cognitively challenging, and emotionally nurturing during uninterrupted play.
- How to synchronize infants' needs and wants with parents' needs and wants, including discipline, communication, health concerns, and guidance techniques.
- When to intervene in the infants' activities, and even more importantly, when to leave them alone!

Requirements of Participants

1. Parents must attend the Introduction/ Orientation on Sunday, October 3rd, 2-4 pm.
2. Commitment to attend all course sessions.
3. Will allow video/still photos of parents and/or child to be used for instructional and training purposes.
4. Review instructional materials and complete questionnaires.
5. Responsible for infant's diapers and food during class.
6. Infants must be age 2-6 months of age as of October 5th, 1993 and under the care of a pediatrician.

About the Instructor

Diane Suskind holds a Doctorate in Early Childhood from the University of Illinois. She has been an assistant professor of Education at Cal State, L.A., and the University of Alaska, Anchorage, as well as a practitioner and consultant for early childhood education at schools and communities in Thailand, Israel, Germany, and the U.S. Dr. Suskind, A RIE Fellow, has co-presented the RIE philosophy with founder Magda Gerber at professional conferences. She studied at Emmi Pikler Institute under the guidance of Anna Tardis in Budapest, Hungary, November 1992.

Quotes from Parent 'N' Me Class

"The Parent 'N' Me class gave me an opportunity to appreciate how competent my baby really is."

Wendy Karuzis
mother of Tyler 5 months

A wonderful class!! Should be a prerequisite for all parents. It taught me that infants are thinking individuals. I should respect not just care for my infant.

Gaye Drummond
mother of Quinn 3 months

"Oh Yeah! This is Diane Suskind. This is what she does. She puts babies on the floor and observes them and it has just dawned on me that I haven't done that."

Susan King
Ft. Wainright, Alaska

She is "very knowledgeable, talented, intelligent, and passionately interested in young children and infants. She is a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher, full of original and innovative ideas."

Magda Gerber.

PS 022149

Application to Parent 'N' Me

Return to: Diane Suskind School of Education, 160 Pearl Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420, no later than September 23rd, 1993.

Infant's Name: _____

D.O.B.: _____ Sex: _____

Mother's Name: _____

Father's Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Infant's Physician: _____

Physician's Phone: _____

Siblings to Infant

Name: _____ Age: _____ M F

Name: _____ Age: _____ M F

Name: _____ Age: _____ M F

Name: _____ Age: _____ M F

How did you hear of this program?

_____

_____

Why are you interested in attending with your infant? _____

_____

_____

Call (508) 345-2151 ext. 3371 or 3193 for more information.

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"We allow infants to do what they are ready and willing to do. We reinforce their self-initiated activities by applying full attention, while being quietly available, and by appreciating and enjoying what the infants actually do. Occasional reflections such as "You touched the ball and it rolled away" reassure the child of our full attention. Saying "It's hard to separate the two cups" shows our empathy. A joyful smile when the infant solves a problem conveys our pleasure in his success. As we value inner directedness in a child, we prefer gentle validations to instructions, to criticism, and even to praise.

"Parents in the RIE program learn how infant and family rhythms develop into predictable routines and how "separate time" and "together time" can be enjoyed. When infants are allowed uninterrupted play time between caregiving activities, parents can have their own time as well. Children who have learned to rely on being stimulated, manipulated and entertained by adults may lose their capacities to be absorbed in independent exploratory activities. Their parents easily become slaves of the naging child/tired parent syndrome they themselves helped unwittingly to create.'

From "*Caring For Infants wtih Respect: The RIE Approach*", by Magda Gerber, *Zero to Three*, February 1984.

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RIE College Style

I would like to introduce myself. I am Diane Suskind, a RIE fellow who has visited Emmi Pikler Institute in Budapest and studied with Anna Tardis. Presently, I am an Assistant Professor at Fitchburg State College where I am teaching an elective Infant/Toddler course often referred to as "Parent-N-Me". The model we use allows the parent and College Student to work together, sharing and observing their infant.

During the Parent-N-Me portion of the course, for eight consecutive weeks, parents are paired off to have a college student as their primary observer. Each week college students have an opportunity to be the Educarer I for the younger infants and Educarer II for the older infants. The Educarer sets up the environment, choose which RIE equipment, toys, will be placed and/or available for choosing. The college student also has the opportunity to be an Assistant who does the feeding and diapering of the infants and a Video Technician. Upon completion of the eight weeks, each child and parent will receive a video of how they developed.

The first hour we primarily observe and focus in the present with the infants. The next half hour the parents view video tapes, discuss concerns and issues away from their infants allowing the college student and infant to be alone together.

We culminate with a telecommunication with Magda Gerber in the President' s Conference room at Fitchburg State College. Here students will be able to speak directly to Magda, what they have discovered and what they truly question. The students and parents would like to share their new fond learning with RIE.

Diane Suskind holds a Doctorate in Early Childhood from the University of Illinois. She has been an assistant professor of Education at Cal State, L.A., and the University of Alaska, Anchorage, as well as a practitioner and consultant for early childhood education at schools and communities in Thailand, Israel, Germany, and the U.S. Dr. Suskind, a RIE Fellow, has co-presented the RIE philosophy with founder Magda Gerber at professional conferences. She studied at Emmi Pikler Institute under the guidance of Anna Tardis in Budapest, Hungary, November 1992.

I am Debbie Betourney a graduate student from Fitchburg State College in the family therapy counseling program. I am also enrolled in the Child Protection Institute to enhance my education in the field of Child Studies. Through this independent study I intend to learn as much as possible about infants and toddlers, child development and parental interaction. I come to this setting without bias towards a particular theoretical approach and thus am enthusiastic about becoming knowledgeable in developmentally appropriate practices in working with infants and toddlers.

My name is Kristen Chebook and I'm a 20 year old Fitchburg State student. I am originally from Billerica, MA and have been a student here at Fitchburg for three years. I decided to go into early childhood education as a freshman because of my love for young children. I'm from a big family with lots of children running and laughing. I want to provide an environment where children can be happy. I have a double major in Sociology which opens up a whole other world of children-related jobs (such as social work). The happiness of children is my main concern and that's why I'm in the Infants and Toddlers class.

My name is Michelle Gregoire and I am a sophomore nursing major here at Fitchburg State College. Through the nursing program, I have had maternity clinical, and as a result I have dealt with newborns. When I graduate, I hope to work in the neonatal intesive care unit.

I would like to introduce myself, I am Tanya Legro and I am a senior here at Fitchburg State College majoring in early Childhood Education. I hope to get a job teaching first or second grade when I graduate. I intend to continue my education by getting my masters in Education. I have worked with infants and toddlers in various settings since the age of 12. I will be assisting Dr. Diane Suskind with this class. I am looking forward to treating your infant and yourself with respect and care.

Hello, my name is Mary Leskoski. I live in Plymouth, MA. I am a senior at Fitchburg State. My major is Early Childhood Education. I hope to some day own my own day care center. I have worked with infants and toddlers since I was fifteen years old. I am looking forward to meeting and working with you and your child.

My name is Lynn Maiorani. I am a mother of three - ages 22, 20, and 18. I am a senior here at Fitchburg state majoring in Early Childhood Education. I have worked in a preschool with 3 and 4 year olds. I plan to continue working wth children of preschool ages.

My name is Stacie Mawn. I am a first semester junior majoring in Early Childhood Education and Sociology. My hobbies consist of sports and babysitting. I play soccer here and also softball. I am interested in working in a day care when I graduate and hopefully opening up my own day care center out of my house. I am very interested in learning more about toddlers and especially infants.

My name is Kim Neault. I am a senior here at Fitchburg State studying Early Childhood Education. I have worked with infants toddlers in the past, and I am looking forward to

working with the parents and infants directly.

My name is Kristin Wappel. I am from North Attleboro, MA. This is my third year at Fitchburg State College. I like to go skiing and mountain hiking. I am a nursing student and plan to go into maternity or pediatrics when I graduate. I love children and I think I will learn a lot from the Parent'N'Me class.

PARENT-N-ME

The Students

The Infant/Toddler class has opened my eyes about the compentency of children. I never realized that observing an infant and watching them discover on their own could be so wonderful and rewarding. With the knowledge I have gained in this class, I will implement what I have learned with the new experiences I will be encountering with my own children as well as other infants and toddlers.

Stacie Mawn

The infant/Toddler class has been a great experience for myself, a College Student, the Parents and the Infants. I have seen a tremedous change in everyone involved. The Parents seem more at ease now and allow their children to initiate in their own safe environment. The toys we use are primarily household items and this seems to work well with our class. The parents were amazed by the simplicity of these toys. They seem to have changed their attitudes about these items by observing their infants engage in the discovery and manipulation of these toys.

Kim Neault

It has been very rewarding for me to participate in the Parent-N-Me class. I have watched the Students, Parents and Infants grow and change.

One very important job of the students of Parent-N-Me was to clean the toys and blankets each time they were used. We all know that most items go directly to the Infants and Toddlers mouths. We use a solution of 1 - 10 bleach and water to clean the toys. By doing this we kept germs down and our infants healthy.

I have also learned to speak to infants and toddlers with direct statements such as "You picked up the bowl." instead of using a question form "Did you pick up a bowl?"

Lynn Maiorani

PARENT-N-ME

The Parents

"Babies, if allowed, love to explore and play and stretch and grow. If they have a safe, stimulating place in which to do this, it is a joy to watch them blossom on their own into secure, confident, happy beings. They need to touch base with loving arms and then go out to see what they can do."

Joan

"When I approach Alex now, I must mentally prepare. Someday, I would hope talking instructionally will become second nature to me. I now realize that Alex will and does give me feedback and it is just a matter of me tuning into his developmental progress. Often I will discuss worldly events while I diaper or dress him. I realize that asking Alex to help me dress him would be equally as important but he will probably enjoy any verbal interaction."

Bruce

"By participating in the Parent-N-Me class, I have learned that D.J. is certainly a competent individual who is able to make his own decisions. He is able to move about freely in our living room choosing what he wants to play with. As he learns each new stage he takes the freedom to do what he can do without getting hurt."

Kim

"I am much more aware now of how other adults interact with Alexander and other children. I notice adult intervention in children's play a lot. I also notice that many adults do not truly view children as people. It's almost like they see through the children."

Cate

"Because of my attendance at these classes, I have become a more relaxed educarer. Brian now accepts that the crib is for sleeping and he does not cry as much when I lay him down. Now I tell him what I am doing with him or what I am about to do.

I've learned to let him be, to explore and play by himself. He is so content. I do not fuss over him and try to do everything for him even before he is ready for it.

He has learned to sit up by himself and crawl without my help. I leave him along more and am more of an observer now.

Today I learned to talk with him and tell him what he is doing."

Grandma

"Dependent on my "instinctual" approach, I rocked by daughter for both sleep and comfort. Now, she is able to soothe herself, problem-solve, and put herself to sleep. All I needed to do was let her. That is not to suggest a parent ignore a child, but rather to observe and delight in our childrens' competence in discovery."

I always knew, intellectually, that it was good for Alexander to develop and grow at his own pace, but I fought the idea that his development should be measured against some external norm. I couldn't get away from this thought completely. I'd read one of my child development books and think Alex should be rolling over by six - seven months, and then I'd view his motor development through that lens. Today, I moved from knowing, intellectually, that Alex should be allowed to develop at his own pace, to <u>really feeling</u> it was O.K., and beyond this, to really appreciating him as competent and just where he should be.

I realize that this will build his self-esteem. If I spend my time giving off anxious energy and always wanting him to do <u>more</u>, he will feel this and may view himself as lacking. If I, on the other hand, spend my time giving off accepting, positive energy, he will feel he is competent and he will develop self-esteem.

Cate Calise
Parent-N-Me' parent
October 19, 1993

Quality Time

Mommy and Daddy, I know how worried you are about the amount of quality time you can give me because of how busy our lives are. I don't need too much. It's really very simple.

When you change my diapers, if you take your time and talk to me and let me help, we will have just shared a special moment.

When you feed me, please just hold me close in your arms and let me take my time eating, and then we will have just shared another special moment.

Sometimes, you can just lie me down on the floor with some interesting objects around me and you can lie down on the floor too and just watch me quietly. You will see how competent I am in exploring my world. We have just share another special moment.

All these special moments add up and I will grow up to be a happy and confident person.

Mommy and Daddy why can't you see how smart I am. I'm not just a cute, cuddly play thing who stares dreamily at my toys or accidentally plays with alike things. I'm much smarter than that, I play with a purpose!!

When you first watch me playing, my attention may seem divided. I am looking at both you and my play objects and hoping you'll see my abilities. I don't want you to put a toy in my hand, I am capable of choosing my own play things if you put some neat toys around me!!

In a little while my attention becomes more sustained. Smile at me and I'll smile back!! I may even be smiling at my toys if you come back to check on me!! I've learned your gestures and I'm able to copy them! I am amazing, huh?! I am banging my rattle against my crib not to be noisy or disturb you, but because I know what is sounds like and sometimes I like to make that noise! What a memory I have! Sometimes I even make similar noises and I bang them too! Please don't make me be quiet!

Sometimes when I find something really exciting my attention becomes more focused. I may be really amazed that my bottle and rattle both roll! I may even discover that the banana piece you gave me rolls too! No I'm not trying to be messy! Don't take it from me! I'm learning on my own, discovering new concepts. Please don't worry about me so much! Make my environment safe and let me play my way! I like it when you watch me, but don't tell me how cute I am again! You're underestimating my abilities! Mom, I like to hear you telling Daddy about what neat things I've done, like when I found the hole in the bottom of my dinosaur and on my block! No, that wasn't a coincidence! I'm really learning!!

KIM NEAULT

Kristin Wappel

Crying A Childs Point of View

As I sit and play with my toys, someone comes up behind me and picks me up. I got scared and began to cry. I see that it was my mom that picked me up and I wasn't as scared anymore. If she would only tell me when she is going to pick me up I wouldn't get so scared and upset. Finally I think I can stop crying.

Now what is mom doing. What is this? She's putting a bottle in my mouth and I'm not even hungry. I think I'm going to cry again. I want to go play with my toys. Great, she took the bottle away but, I'm still crying I want to go play with my toys. Why can't she just let me play on my own.

Mary Leskoski
Diapering Revised

Oh Great! Here she comes. There I go. Plunk! On the changing table she puts me. I cry because she startled me by removing me from my safe environment to a change. Why is she changing me? I didn't tell her I needed a new diaper. Why doesn't she tell me what she's going to do to me? She acts as if I'm just an object! I'm a person too! I wish she would pay attention to me while she diapers. If only she would look at me and talk to me while she diapers, I could learn a great deal from our interactions with each other. A positive diapering experience could further our parent and child relationship even more.

Stacie Mawn
Infants and Toddlers

TOYS (I am a baby observing a squeeky toy.)

Why does my everybody have to keep moving this thing in front of my face? How come I can't just touch it? Where is that noise coming from? It seems that every time someone picks that thing up it makes a noise. I want to touch it, someone just give it to me. Aahh here we go finally I get to touch it. Wow, what's this on the bottom? My finger fits in it. Wow check this out this thing does make that noise. All I need to do is put both of my hands together on this thing and squeeze and wow look it makes that noise again. Wait, wait, why are they taking it from me again, How come I can't play with it, I finally figured out how to do it theres no need to show me again. How come people won't let me explore for myself sometimes?

Tanya Legro

Guidance

I like to explore. There are so many neat things, I want to know what they look like, sound like, feel like and taste like. Everything is new to me. Sometimes, my caregiver tells me not to touch something, but I don't understand why. Are they worried about my safety? I was able to reach it and grab it all by myself! Why can't I try to figure out what it is? Why do they have to tell me "NO" and take it away? Why don't they keep it out of my reach in the first place? If it is out of my reach and out of my sight, I will not want it. If everything around me is safe for me to play with, I will be able to explore and play freely; my caregiver will not need to get worried about my safety and will not need to take things away from me.

Being Alone: A Child's Perspective

Why is someone always picking me up, don't they understand that I want to be alone. I like to have time to myself, so I can discover things on my own. I like having my own time, because I can do anything I want. Sometimes I play with my toys, other times I just look around at the different things around me. I like it when people talk to me and play with me, but sometimes it gets annoying because they won't leave me alone. It seems like someone is always around trying to make me do things I don't want to do. Then I cry, because I'm trying to tell them that I just want to have time to myself. I like being alone, don't you?

Michelle Gregoire

Kristen Chebook 10/1/93

Sleeping

I'm so tired of sitting here in this swing, going back and forth, listening to the same song all the time. I wish my parents would come over and put me to bed. Here comes my mom, there goes my mom. Here comes my dad, gee that's a real funny face he makes at me. Maybe if I cry they will come over and pick me up. " WAAAAHHHHH!!!!" Oh yeah moms coming! She picked me up and is bouncing me up and down. Oh no "WAAAAHHHH" that's not what I want. I am going to rub my eyes and fuss for as long as I have to. Oh, now she is cradling me in her arms. I love being close to her. Dad just kissed my forehead - that feels great too. Now she is humming and I am fading. She brings me in my room and for an instant I am cold when she puts me down so I fussed a little. But now I am curled up in my favorite fuzzy blanket with my cozy stuffed animals and I am ready to fall asleep. As I breathe slower and slower and relax more and more I drift off until I wake to see mom and dad again.

SCENARIO I. BY DIANE SUSKIND

The baby is found in a walker. Caregiver says "you seem tired" and walks away. Infant looks around, arms hung over, legs stretched out. Caregiver, after 45 minutes, picks him up and then he is on the floor, found touching some plastic toys. He pulls a toy from another child. She cries. Another caregiver screams "No, stop that, " picks him up, puts him in a swing and winds it up. I think that lasts 15 minutes or so. The infant gets in a semiconscious state rocking back and forth, back and forth, until he is asleep. Caregiver to another caregiver, "It stinks around here. He needs to be changed, "pointing to the child in the swing. Caregiver never says a word. She picks him up and he jolts up and starts to cry from his semiconscious state. She changes him, little or no talking transpired. If this baby could talk, "Why am I treated like I'm not here? Do they think I am an inanimate object?" It seems that I should cry. I get rewarded when I cry. They pick me up. Why don't they let me do what I'm capable of doing? Oops. Now they are putting me in that high chair, I hate being confined. I'm capable of sitting up, why can't I sit at a table my size with a chair I can get in and out of. I can feed myself. Why is the caregiver feeding me and talking to another caregiver. She isn't even watching. She is getting it on my chin. Yuk! I know I can drink out of a cup if they would give me a chance. I don't need that cover on. A caregiver asked me if I'm finished, but didn't even look. I have been finished for over 15 minutes and I guess I'll have to cry again. She got me washed and now to the swing. I'm holding my bottle. I know I'll fall off to sleep. Then they put me in my bed with my bottle if I'm lucky, but its scary to wake up in a different place from where I fell asleep. It makes me disoriented. Mom and Dad, I know you love me and the caregivers are well meaning, but why can't they see I just want to be me and discover and make choices. It needs to start now. I have learned if you cry, you get attention. Is that what you want me to learn? If I had a choice, the second scenario is more of my liking.

Scenario II.

I'm greeted by the caregiver while in my dad's arms. The caregiver looks directly at me and welcomes me. She is treating me as a person.

I look around the room, have my jacket remove and am told that I am being placed on the carpeted area - Wow! There is a long bench to walk around. Another caregiver is sitting on the floor and smiling at me. The wood on the bench feels hard. Think I'll try mouthing it. Another baby is there. She tries to bite me. The caregiver reminded her to be gentle. She said, "I won't let you bite Jason nor Jason bite you." I feel safe. I can crawl you know and they made a lovely space. It must have been a closet. They put a mattress in it and a sheet over it. I love to have my bottle in my caregiver's lap in there.

I play some more then I got wet and needed to have my diaper change. The caregiver said, "Come, you're all wet, I want to change you." She waited until I let go of my toy and picked me up gentle and we went to the diapering table. My friend crawled into the bathroom and watched, but then crawled into an open cubby and looked at the baby picture. Being diapered is not a secret and it can be shared as a normal process.

Pretty soon it was time for lunch and I got to sit at a table that was my size. I poured my own drink from a small cup. It was fun. And I drank out of my cup without a cover. I spilled a little. The caregiver let me help her clean it up.

After awhile I took my nap. No big deal. It is a routine and I cry for two or three minutes to calm myself down. I'm capable of putting myself to sleep. What a good feeling.

Mom and Dad, this is the kind of place I want to be. I have the right to grow to the best of my abilities. Maybe everyone in child care, if they were aware of it, could strive and

allow this freedom and autonomy to flourish.

Thank You!